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In These Times

INDEPENDENT NEWS & VIEWS

April 19, 1997

India's Identity Crisis

**Hindu nationalists take power
but regional parties are the real winners**

Ethirajan Anbarasan reports



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Editorial

The Personal is Political

One of the more disturbing things about Bill Clinton's alleged sex scandals has been how many leading feminists remained silent while the president's loyal mate attacked her husband's girlfriends as trashy sluts. These attacks were to be expected from the First Lady. But from other feminist leaders and Clinton's Hollywood stalwarts, one might have expected something better than neutrality in the face of floozy-bashing.

Fortunately, and to their great credit, National Organization of Women President

Patricia Ireland and a smattering of other feminists have finally cracked the wall of willfully blind support for "their" president. "Perhaps we need to redefine what a good president is, what a good man is," Ireland said on the *Today* show, the morning after Kathleen Willey told *60 Minutes* that Clinton had made uninvited sexual advances. The president's

actions, Ireland suggested, went "beyond the idea of the likable rogue or the womanizer and really on into sexual assault, sexual abuse." While Ireland was not "ready to say that the president should step aside," she added, "when the chief executive officer uses [his] position of power in the way that it's been alleged, [it] has a very serious impact on women in the workplace."

Yet, some argue that the president's private sexual behavior has nothing to do with his public responsibilities—that private affairs should remain private, and that we, as citizens, should be concerned only with policies and programs. And to the extent that his personal behavior does not affect—or reflect—his role as head of state, that may be true. Indeed, those who take this position point to previous presidents like George Bush, John F. Kennedy, Franklin D. Roosevelt and others all the way back to George Washington, who all enjoyed their own private peccadilloes without seriously compro-

misng their effectiveness as public figures

Clinton's case, however, is different for at least three reasons. First, we live in different times. In the not so distant past, it was generally accepted that men, especially of the upper classes, could have mistresses as well as wives, and it was equally accepted that their extramarital activities should not have an impact on their political careers.

Second, 30 years ago, the women's movement discovered that the distinction between private and public affairs was oppressive. The personal is political, femi-

nists concluded. Although that idea has too often been carried to unfortunate ideological extremes, it is true that personal attitudes and behavior reflect and impact public policy.

Third, and most important in this present context, Clinton's private conduct is in keeping with how he has acted in his public career. He has brought sleaze wherever he has gone. During his 1992

presidential campaign, he swore that he never had an affair with Gennifer Flowers. Now, in his deposition in the Paula Jones case, to protect himself from perjury he admits that he did sleep with Flowers—but just once. During that same campaign, Clinton was equally evasive when accused of smoking pot. He admitted toking—someone saw him do that—but claimed he "didn't inhale." And, of course, he claimed that he didn't dodge the draft, though, in fact, he arranged a deferment during the Vietnam War.

This pattern of lies and slick evasions carries over into public policy. Whether in regard to NAFTA, Saddam Hussein or raising the minimum wage, Clinton cannot be believed. His job ratings remain high because the economy is booming, but he has also raised the level of public cynicism and disgust with politics. By doing so, he has increased cynicism about politics and further weakened our democracy. —J.W.

**Clinton's pattern
of lies and
slick evasions in
his private life
carries over into
public policy.**



Cover photo of a 50th-anniversary
jubilee float in Bombay by
Sebastian D'Souza/AFP Photo.



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Letters

Bum Rap

I'm frustrated with the coverage of popular music in *In These Times*. Taken as a whole, American popular music (rock, metal, country, rap, jazz) is a strong progressive social force. Some of the most popular artists—as opposed to the obscurities recently celebrated by Doug Imbrogno ("It's Only Rock 'n' Roll," October 5, 1997) and Carl Vogel ("The Rebirth of Cool," March 8)—are publicly committed to a progressive social agenda. For instance, *Evil Empire*, Rage Against the Machine's latest album, condemns U.S. foreign policy and champions the Zapatista rebellion.

It was somewhat encouraging that Salim Muwakkil ("Rap's Dilemma," March 8) has stopped repeating the most outrageous caricatures of gangsta rap, but he still misinterprets rap's social relevance. I hope Muwakkil will overcome his aversion to African-American street culture, listen to a few gangsta rap albums and realize that its predominant message is not random violence and misogyny, but instead despair at inner-city living conditions, anger at police who function as little more than a hostile occupation army, and protest against an unfair legal system. Young whites are drawn to gangsta rap not because they're seeking vicarious thrills, as Muwakkil implies, but because they too are alienated and angry, and because they strongly identify with the injustices felt by rappers. Tupac Shakur, a gangsta rapper if there ever was one, courageously released his touching welfare-

mom solidarity song "Keep Your Head Up" on the eve of the Gingrich anti-welfare offensive. Two years later, he expanded on the theme with "Dear Mama," which personalized the dilemma of unwed mothers and wrapped it in some of the most poignant, beautiful music of this decade.

These are just a few examples—popular music is saturated with a progressive agenda. You do not need to chase underground trends or look under rocks to find worthwhile music. It's right under our noses. The musical snobbery at *ITT* ultimately keeps an alienated (and socially progressive) youth at a distance, and I find that extremely sad.

Tim Lawless
Lexington Park, Md.

Limits on Immigration

As a long-time subscriber to *In These Times* and a member of the Sierra Club, I was disappointed to read Joel Bleifuss' article ("Sierra's Divide," March 22) condemning the immigration control initiative that recently appeared on the Sierra Club ballot as the work of a "reactionary faction."

These are the facts: The Census Bureau projects that the U.S. population will grow by an additional 124 million people by the year 2050 if birth and immigration rates do not change. The National Academy of Sciences estimates that two-thirds of future U.S. population growth will come from immigration.

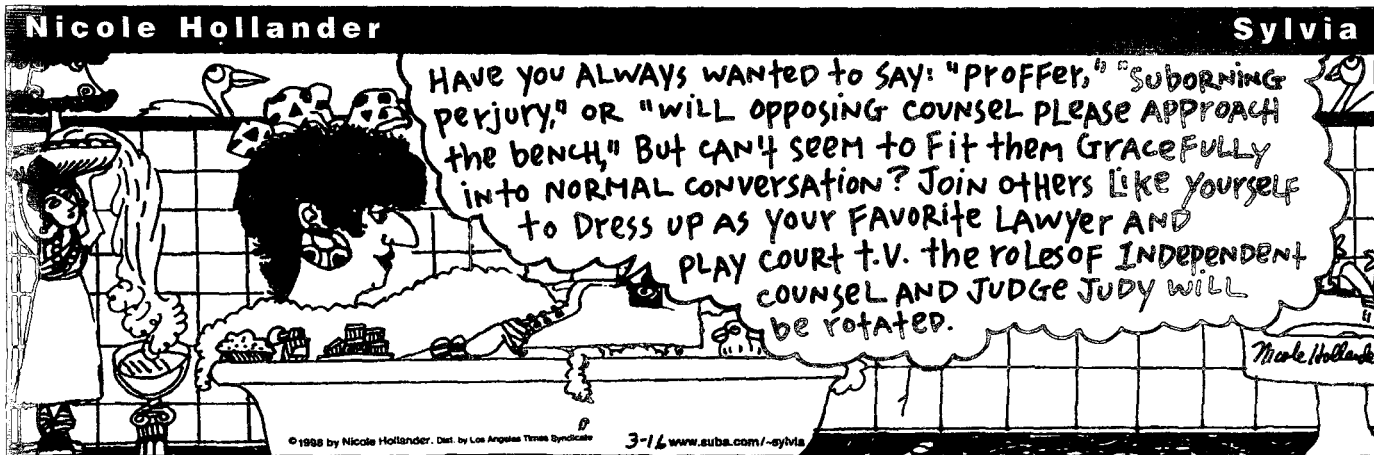
For an *ITT* writer living and working in Chicago, such numbers may be meaningless abstractions. But for those of us who live near the untrammelled



landscapes, open spaces and wildlife of the Rocky Mountain West, population growth manifests itself around us daily. I see it in ceaseless suburban sprawl, lost wildlife habitats, disappearing open spaces, increased highway traffic and degraded air quality. Immigration is not the sole cause of these problems, of course. Nevertheless, the need to accommodate 124 million more residents within my nephew's lifetime will inevitably perpetuate these trends.

In fact, nearly every environmental problem is aggravated by the increasing number of humans consuming energy and natural resources. Unfortunately, U.S. immigration has become such a sensitive political topic that efforts to set immigration at environmentally sustainable levels result, predictably, in charges of racism and elitism. This is unfortunate because it begs the fundamental question: How many people is enough?

If our planet is to remain livable and ecologically stable, two goals must be achieved. First, we must reduce our consumption of resources, particularly here in the United States. Second, we must stabilize the global population. Clearly, the latter goal is a global issue, not solved by shutting down U.S. borders to immigration. But by insisting on sus-



tainable rates of immigration here in the United States, we can act locally to better protect the natural resources we treasure. That is an admirable goal that we should assist all countries in achieving.

Don Anderson
Denver

In response to Joel Bleifuss' population polemics, there should be a middle-ground dialogue on the role of immigration in population growth. We currently have the most generous open-door policy in the world. This greatly benefits our mega-corporations, which not only seek out cheap labor abroad, but can also use the influx of workers to drive down wages within our borders.

Rather than labeling people anti-immigrant, we need to look at what population would be sustainable on this large but not limitless piece of land we call America. We can have a rational population policy that is neither racist nor preferential but does specify numbers and regulates flow in a manner that is consistent with the effort to develop an ecologically friendly and less energy-intensive infrastructure. And we could do this while we examine our own consumption habits, which new immigrants usually begin to emulate soon after arrival.

Ethnic and other human diversities are what make our society what it is. But greater and greater populations will, at

some point, exhaust this landscape and the treasures that captured Sierra Club founder John Muir's mind and heart. Joel, have you spoken with Lester Brown, Dave Foreman and the rest of the "right-wingers"? It might be time.

Randy Crutcher
Arcata, Calif.

Joel Bleifuss responds: I do not deny that a burgeoning human population is one of the environmental factors that places an untenable strain on the earth's ecosystem. But curtailing world population growth requires an international effort, not a nativist, anti-immigrant initiative like the one now before members of the Sierra Club.

Fighting Back

My friends in the immigrant rights movement tell me that my story about cooperation between the Border Patrol, the military and the police ("Crossing Borders," March 22) was too dour. They say that I should have discussed the good work that activists are doing to resist anti-immigrant policing. To set the record straight, those who wish to help resist the bullying can start by calling the National Network for Immigrant and Refugee Rights at (510) 465-1984.

Christian Parenti
San Francisco

Child's Play

Annette Fuentes' article ("Playing Politics with Kids' Health," February 22) about the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) was right on the point. However, she missed an even bigger problem: The children of low-income public workers (school district, city, county and state employees) will be ineligible for health care if states choose a separate insurance program instead of expanding Medicaid.

Public workers unions should be fighting for health care for all children alongside child-advocacy organizations. Here in Mississippi, our union is, along with the Mississippi Coalition and the Mississippi AFL-CIO.

For thousands of low-paid Mississippi public workers, this would eliminate the need for a \$221 monthly premium for a grossly inadequate health plan and bring quality health care to all of our children.

Bill Chandler
Executive Vice-President for Organization
Mississippi Alliance of State Employees
Jackson, Miss.

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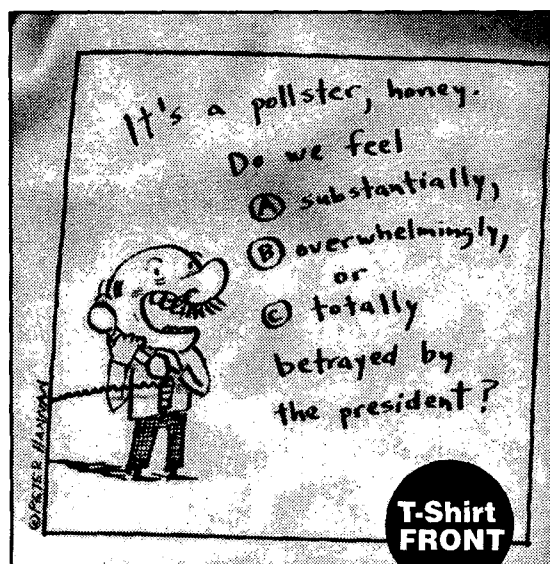
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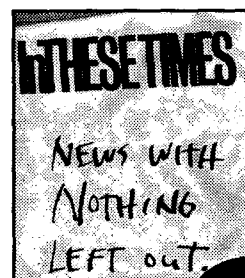
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Saturn's New Image

BY JANE SLAUGHTER

Saturn has spent millions cultivating its image as "a new kind of company," where workers and management work together in harmony in Spring Hill, Tenn. Its commercials have showed satisfied workers happily painting fences and even a union rep and a manager sharing a bed.

That cheerful image got a black eye in early March when a third of Saturn's 7,200-member union work force voted to scrap their unique contract. Alarmed by slow sales and production cuts, the workers were seeking more job security, which they believe the standard General Motors-United Auto Workers (UAW) national contract offers.

Saturn, a wholly owned subsidiary of GM, built its first car in 1990. The factory complex was an experiment along two lines: labor-management partnership and the quest to build a small car to compete with Japanese models. Unlike the rigid work rules of the standard GM contract, the Saturn pact requires management and workers to cooperate in teams. It calls for union members to sit on top-level committees and for the lowest-level supervisor's job to be performed jointly by company and union appointees. The contract also trades lower base pay for the opportunity to earn larger bonuses.

But a sizable number of Saturn workers hate the cozy system. They describe it as "fascism" and "Tammany Hall." "How would you feel if you were in a labor union and your boss helped appoint the people that represent you?" asks Tom Hopp, a worker at the plant for four years.

Hopp, who transferred to Saturn from a shuttered GM plant in Michigan, is one of two workers who touched off the

latest rebellion. They rented a local high school gym on February 8 and called a meeting for workers concerned about pay and the threat of layoffs. Six hundred people came. At a local union meeting two weeks later, members voted overwhelmingly to hold a referendum on the question, "Do we adopt the UAW-GM national agreement?"

It's ironic that workers would turn to GM, a company known for ruthless downsizing, for job security. Almost all Saturn workers had transferred to Ten-

While the standard GM contract does not prevent the company from eliminating jobs, it continues to pay workers for the duration of the contract. GM workers also have the right to transfer from a closed plant to another active one. Saturn workers, on the other hand, gave up their GM seniority and transfer rights when they came to Spring Hill.

Saturn workers are scared about slipping sales. Buyers today are less interested in small cars, and a new mid-size Saturn will be built in a regular GM plant in Delaware, not in Tennessee. Slow sales have led to production cuts and the curtailment of overtime, which many workers depend on. In addition, bonuses that had kept Saturn workers earning more than their GM counterparts have been slashed.

Local union leaders campaigned hard against changing the contract. Local President Joe Rypkowski told a local TV station that a "yes" vote would result in the immediate

layoff of 2,700 workers. Workers were also told that if they rejoined GM, their seniority date would be 1998—not their original year of hiring. And company execs, lobbied by local union officials, made it easier for workers to earn bonuses.

Richard Benavides, a leader of the failed effort, said that though the referendum lost, it could act as a temporary "insurance policy" against layoffs. "The company and the union are going to have to live up to their promise not to lay people off," Hopp says. "If they don't keep it, we'll be right there." ■

Jane Slaughter is a labor journalist in Detroit.



Saturn boasts of its satisfied work force.

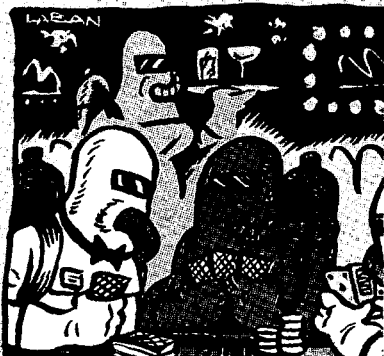
nessee from other GM plants, many of them shuttered or endangered, and the Saturn contract pledges not to lay workers off unless there are "catastrophic events or severe economic conditions."

But a sizable minority do not trust that pledge. "People to some degree have been conditioned [by their experience at GM]," explains UAW Local 1853 Vice President Dave Holman, who supported keeping the old contract. "When things get slow and GM has not designated your facility to get a new product, they've seen what happens. Saturn has not been designated a new product to build in Tennessee. When people see that, and the market is soft, they come up with a conclusion."

appall-o-meter

BY DAVID FUTRELLE

The In These Times Index of Indecencies



Know When to Hold 'em, Know When to Fold 'em 5.8

The recent anthrax scare in Las Vegas made a lot of people awfully jittery. In the city's casinos, though, the specter of biological terrorism didn't slow down the gaming a bit. "It makes you a little apprehensive," Canadian tourist Cecile Lebedow told *The Associated Press*. "But I don't think it would stop us from coming to Las Vegas or stop us from gambling."

Battle Hymns 7.4

Never mind that the hit song "Tub-thumping" was written and performed by Chumbawamba, an anarchist collective known for dumping ice water on insufficiently leftist Labour Party leaders in England and making records dedicated to the "smashing" of fascism. That didn't stop one wannabe hitmaker from turning the song into a paean to war, the online 'zine *Suck* notes. The lyrics to "Saddambombing (The Iraq Song)" transform Chumbawamba's drinking song into something a little nastier: "Let's hunt him down/And shoot 'em in the head/Let's beat the crap out of Saddam/Let's hunt him down/And shoot him in the head/And bomb Iraq to the ground."

Talk Dirty to Me 8.2

New York lawyer Rosalie Osias, who put \$10,000 of her own money into a defense fund for Monica Lewinsky, says

American women have been too quick to dismiss the former White House intern as simply starstruck. Indeed, Osias argues, women should get on their knees and thank Lewinsky for showing them the way to get ahead in a man's world. Of course, you don't have to be in the White House to take advantage of the Osias Way. "If a man in my office wants to touch me or say dirty things to me, I invite that," Osias told *The New Republic*. "Especially if that person can help me."

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prisons

Dialing for Dollars

BY CRAIG AARON

Providing phone service to prisons has become a multimillion-dollar business for long-distance carriers. Companies can charge exorbitant rates and fees to prisoners that would outrage normal consumers as long as they kick back a percentage of the profits to the state as a "commission."

To contact attorneys or loved ones from most prisons, inmates must call collect, allowing phone companies to levy the highest charges allowed by law. The more hidden costs and fees the companies tack on, the bigger the profits for the company and the state. Virginia, for instance, raked in \$12.5 million last year from its deal with MCI, according to Jean Auldrige, director of the Virginia chapter of Citizens United for the Rehabilitation of Errants (CURE), a prisoner advocacy group. "Nobody's saying that

prisoners shouldn't pay for their own phone service," she says, "but states are gouging poor families."

In Colorado, a group of inmates and their families are fighting back. The group asked the state Supreme Court in February to compel the Colorado Public Utilities Commission to rule if phone charges levied under a contract between the state Department of Corrections and Sprint from 1991 to 1995 were "just and reasonable." The commission argues that it has no jurisdiction in the case.

Under the Sprint system, prisoners made phone calls with a debit card, which withdrew money from their inmate account. In addition to toll charges and extremely high per-minute rates, prisoners were charged a \$1.25 connection fee. No call could last more

than 15 minutes, but prisoners were allowed to redial as long as money allowed, getting hit with the fee each time. Inmates also complained of being charged for "ring time" before a call was answered or even if no one answered at all. Colorado took home nearly 20 percent of the gross profits. The actual figure is disputed, but attorney Ron Beeks, who represents the inmates, estimates that the state's earnings were in "the high six figures" annually.

If the court rules in the inmates' favor, Beeks will seek refunds. "It's not the prisoners who pay for this," he says. "Who puts the money in their accounts? Their friends and family, who haven't done anything. No one else would put up with this. But they had no choice but to use this system or just not make a phone call." ■

The Numbers Game

BY EVA BERTRAM AND KENNETH SHARPE

In its 1998 National Drug Control Strategy, the Clinton Administration vows to cut illegal drug use and availability in half by 2007.

The national drug strategy—which the president is required to prepare annually—details the administration's priorities and plans for fighting drugs. The 1998 strategy, released in late February, outlines five goals, ranging from reducing the social costs of drug use to shutting down foreign trafficking organizations. When Congress considers the president's 1999 budget in the next few months, lawmakers will be asked to approve an unprecedented \$17.1 billion to implement the plan, a 6.8 percent increase over last year's drug budget.

The announcement triggered a predictable election-year response from Republicans, who called the 10-year plan to cut drug use by 50 percent "timid and defeatist." Pointing to the more than 50 percent rise in youth drug abuse since 1992, House Speaker Newt Gingrich concluded that "the final objective of the president's new plan—his definition of victory—is to correct some of the damage that his administration has already done."

But beyond the election-year hyperbole, this year's strategy holds little hope of reversing the costly, ineffective and inhumane drug war that Democratic and Republican administrations alike have waged for more than 30 years. To be sure, there are promising elements. Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey's rejection of the "war" metaphor and quick-fix mentality that have shaped the drug debate are welcome signs of leadership. McCaffrey's recognition of the value of methadone treatment for heroin addicts and his commitment to increase treatment in prisons are also important steps.

But the strategy remains focused on battling the supply of drugs. An overwhelming 66 percent of the new drug budget will go to interdiction and

source-country and domestic law-enforcement programs that have failed to significantly raise drug prices or reduce abuse in the past. McCaffrey trumpets a 15 percent increase in youth drug prevention as the largest percentage increase in the budget. But this \$256 million is a drop in the bucket next to the Justice Department's allotment of \$7.67 billion, mostly for drug enforcement.

The most significant change in this year's plan is in the sphere of administrative control, not strategy. For the first time, the plan establishes "performance measures" for more than 50 agencies involved in the drug fight. These measures are only valuable, however, if they mark meaningful progress toward reducing drug abuse. But too often, statistical measures in the drug war obscure rather than clarify.

The political ping-pong match between Gingrich and the Clinton administration is the latest example of this problem: Whom do you count, and when do you start counting? Do you count youth drug users or all drug users? Do you count those who have used marijuana once within the past year or cocaine addicts with a daily habit? Do you start in 1979—when drug use peaked in most categories—to show a 19-year trend toward lower use? Or do you start in 1992, focusing on the recent rise in youth drug abuse? Both sides in the debate can use "accurate" statistics to demonstrate opposing points, utterly failing to illuminate the public debate on drugs.

In some areas—such as treatment and prevention—performance standards may improve efforts to reduce abuse. But the supply-reduction programs that dominate U.S. drug control are fundamentally flawed in

ways that more careful measurement and oversight of agency progress will not solve. Because most drugs are so cheap to grow, refine, ship and sell, the strategy of reducing use by raising prices is futile. As drug enforcement drives prices up, it also drives profits up—drawing new producers and dealers into the trade. As long as there are buyers, even successful enforcement in one area—an Andean coca-growing region or a city street—simply drives operations elsewhere.

The conclusion is troubling but unavoidable: The current strategy can never be more than the sum of its parts. Getting each agency to faithfully execute its part of a flawed strategy will not solve the drug problem. Real progress in reducing drug abuse will only come when we shift resources to a long-term public-health strategy that addresses the complex reasons that Americans use and abuse drugs. ■

Eva Bertram is a policy analyst in Washington, D.C. Kenneth Sharpe is a professor of political science at Swarthmore College.



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Media Critic

Whitewashing Suharto

BY JIM NAURECKAS

"Suharto is no Saddam," the *New York Times* "Week in Review" assured us on March 8.

How so? The Indonesian dictator's rule is no less autocratic than Saddam Hussein's. Like Hussein, Suharto has attempted to annex a smaller neighbor—in fact, his ongoing occupation of East Timor has been far bloodier than Hussein's assault on Kuwait. While Hussein's regime has been brutally repressive, Suharto is directly responsible for one of the greatest acts of mass murder in post-World War II history: the genocide that accompanied his rise to power in 1965.

Supposedly reacting to a Communist-backed attempt to overthrow the government, Suharto seized power from President Sukarno, a leader of the non-aligned movement. Suharto immediately organized a systematic slaughter of the ethnic Chinese minority, which was believed to be the main base of support for the Communist Party. Conservative estimates of the death toll are in the hundreds of thousands; a 1977 Amnesty International report cited a tally of "many more than one million."

But Suharto is a U.S. ally, and has conducted his atrocities with either the tacit approval or the active participation of the U.S. government. For the establishment press, that has made all the difference. Even as he balks at some of the strings attached to International Monetary Fund (IMF) loans, thereby incurring mild criticism of his "crony capitalism," prominent newspapers still can't seem to face squarely Suharto's bloody history.

Sometimes Suharto's record of violence is ignored or absurdly trivialized: The *Boston Globe* awkwardly summed him up as someone "who has been praised for modernizing Indonesia's economy over the last three decades but

quelching opposing views." Quelching? One doubts the *Globe* would use that word to describe Pol Pot's reign in Cambodia.

The *Los Angeles Times*, in a March 10 story on Suharto being given new emergency powers by his rubber-stamp legislature, noted reassuringly that he has often had such powers, but "used them only in 1965 in a bloody campaign to rid Indonesia of Communists and dissidents." That's a bit like saying that the Nuremberg Laws were "only" in effect in Germany between 1935 and 1945.

Even journalists who are obviously familiar with the events of 1965, find ways to write around Suharto's role. The *Washington Post*, recounting how the dictator came to power, reported that Suharto "emerged from the chaos of 1965 after leading a military takeover against what has been described as an aborted communist coup." The *Post* went on to praise Suharto for improving Indonesia's economy and "unifying the country's diverse 300-plus ethnic groups."

The *Christian Science Monitor* actually treated the massacres as a heroic episode in Suharto's life: During "a period of horrific attacks on communists and their supporters," Suharto "stepped into the vacuum," "instilled calm" and "took contentious politics out of the picture." "Suharto will forever be acclaimed for his actions during

the crisis," the *Monitor* asserted.

The "Week in Review" piece that promised to explain the difference between Hussein and Suharto acknowledged the scale of the 1965 slaughter, and noted that many of the victims were killed by the military "as Mr. Suharto came to power." But the *Times* used this at least semi-honest account to explain the importance of "stability" in Indonesia, and therefore why the United States "prefers to spar with the authoritarian they know rather than a new general they never met."

It's possible that more forthright accounts will emerge if Suharto continues to frustrate the IMF's plans to make Asia more hospitable to multinational corporations. The *Washington Post*'s Jim Hoagland ended a column with a reference to "Indonesia's brutal treatment of the East Timorese population," which supposedly demonstrates Suharto's "contempt for outside opinion."

The opinions that matter to Suharto, of course, are those of official Washington, which has been quietly supportive of his occupation of East Timor for decades. And that same official opinion determines which crimes the establishment press recognizes, and how much outrage it shows. ■

Jim Naureckas is editor of *Extra!*, the magazine of the media watch group *Fairness & Accuracy in Reporting (FAIR)*.

online

- It started as one disgruntled consumer's complaint about a denied claim, but Paula Moran's campaign against Allstate Insurance has evolved into a full-fledged crusade to expose fraud and deception at the hands of "the worst insurer in America." Her sprawling site (www.geocities.com/WallStreet/Floor/7056) is packed with testimonials from former Allstate policy-holders and employees, who attest to a host of fraudulent, predatory and morally questionable practices.
- Netizens beware: A search engine can't tell the difference between sites like Labornet (www.lgc.org/lgc/labornet) and the Labor Home Page (www.abic.org/heritage/labor). As a recent issue of *The American Prospect* points out, the latter is run by the Heritage Foundation. "Dedicated to providing ... a better understanding of today's workplace issues," the site endorses the Paycheck Protection Act, opposes raising the minimum wage, supports child labor and laments the AFL-CIO's role as a "powerful lobby for liberal special interests and big government."

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trade

NAFTA for Africa?

BY JEFFERSON DECKER

On March 11, the House of Representatives passed the African Growth and Opportunity Act, a bill that is intended to increase U.S. trade with Africa by knocking down tariff walls and investment barriers between the United States and participating nations. In a strange vote even by the standards of recent trade bills, both the Congressional Black Caucus and "fair-trade" liberals split their votes.

The bill now goes to the Senate, which is not expected to move on it until May or June. If it passes, all of sub-Saharan Africa would become eligible for tariff reductions if they meet a series of eligibility requirements, including market reforms, "appropriate fiscal systems," and respect for human rights. Once the president deems that a nation is qualified, he can negotiate bilateral trade agreements with its government.

The bill is under attack by the AFL-CIO as well as progressive groups like Public Citizen's Global Trade Watch and Transafrica. Public Citizen's Mike Dolan condemns the measure as an "Africa NAFTA." "It has all the privatization and austerity crap that is supposed to put African governments' houses in order but is not good for their society," he says. Furthermore, he adds, the bill sets standards for intellectual property rights and corporate taxation but addresses labor and environmental issues only in "feel-good preamble language that isn't enforced."

The Republican leadership endorsed the bill, calling it a frugal way to help Africa. "Trade, not aid," was their mantra. House Democrats split down the middle, with 92 members voting for the initiative and 101 against. But supporters of the bill included several of the House's most liberal members. Minority leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.), who

left politics

Labor vs. Liberals

BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

In the Illinois Democratic gubernatorial primary on March 17, labor and liberal Democrats were sharply divided. The AFL-CIO endorsed Rep. Glenn Poshard, a downstate Democrat with an excellent labor record, who opposes abortion, gun control and gay rights. And thanks to the federation's get-out-the-vote effort, Poshard coasted to victory over three more liberal candidates. Bill Looby, a spokesman for the Illinois AFL-CIO, says the federation has never worked harder in a primary campaign.

Low turnout across the state aided the Poshard campaign, which successfully mobilized Democrats in southern Illinois along with union voters. He won the nomination with 38 percent of the vote, beating out former Attorney General Roland Burris, liberal corporate lawyer John Schmidt and former U.S. Attorney Jim Burns. Poshard will square off against Secretary of State George Ryan in November.

But in the general election, the Democratic Party won't be able to count on many of their traditional, liberal constituencies in the governor's race. "In November, people will turn out to vote for Sen. Carol Mosely-Braun, but will likely skip over the governor's race," says Tracy Baim, publisher and editor of *Outlines*, a Chicago gay and lesbian weekly. "Why the hell should we vote for somebody who votes against us constantly?"

In the House, Poshard earned a rating of zero on gay issues from the Human Rights Campaign. Prior to the primary, the Illinois Federation for Human Rights advised its members to "vote for anyone but Glenn Poshard."

Women's groups are equally dismayed at his record, which includes votes in the House against abortion and comparable-worth legislation. After Sen. Richard Durbin endorsed Poshard, a group of women who had contributed to his campaign fund demanded their money back. "I could never vote for Poshard," Lorna Brett, co-president of the Illinois chapter of the National Organization for Women, told the *Chicago Tribune*. "It is not even a discussion."

During the campaign, Poshard vowed that "unions will not only have a seat at the table with me, they will have the seat next to me." That helped win round one, but it may not be enough for the Democrats to retake the governor's mansion for the first time in 22 years this fall. ■

helped lead the charge against fast track last fall, voted in favor of the bill. And Rep. Charles Rangel (D-N.Y.), a member of the Congressional Black Caucus, co-sponsored the legislation along with Rep. Phil Crane (R-Ill.).

Georgia Democrat Cynthia McKinney was also among the ayes. James Roth, an aide to McKinney, told *In These Times* that the bill will cost U.S. workers almost nothing, and that the language about privatization is broad enough that developing nations will not be coerced into adopting harsh austerity measures. In the meantime, he says, the bill is a crucial departure from Cold War-era foreign policy since it treats African nations

as "partners," rather than pieces in a global power-broking game.

Dolan of Public Citizen counters that the bill hurts the people it intends to help. "Rangel wants to go on record as doing something for Africa," he says, "and with a Republican Congress, that something turns out to be the worst."

Roth accuses the bill's critics of paternalism. "Congresswoman McKinney met with the African diplomatic corps and asked, 'Are these provisions so onerous?'" he says. "They said, 'No, we can handle this. We need this.' To then say, 'We know what's best for you' is offensive. It's treating them like children." ■

Learning From Defeat

BY HANS JOHNSON

For supporters of gay rights in Maine, the myth of Sisyphus has taken on new meaning. For 20 years, they labored to pass a statewide bill barring discrimination against gays and lesbians in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit. Local ordinances provoked referendums in Portland in 1992 and Lewiston in 1993. That year, a statewide bill fell to a governor's veto. In 1995, gay rights advocates defeated a statewide anti-gay ballot initiative that would have pre-empted all local gay rights ordinances.

Last May, proponents finally prodded an anti-discrimination bill through the legislature and convinced Governor Angus King, an independent, to sign it into law. But even then, they faced one last hurdle. A petition by anti-gay activists, led by the local and national arms of the Christian Coalition and the Washington, D.C.-based Family Research Council, triggered a February 10 special election on the law's fate.

Gay rights advocates lost the vote by a razor-thin margin of 51 to 49 percent, with just 7,000 votes separating the two sides. In doing so, they frittered away a 2-to-1 lead in polls conducted just two weeks before the vote. They also squandered \$500,000 in campaign funds—a war chest five times that of their opponents. Their failure to save the Maine law sent shock-waves through the national gay rights movement. Where did they go wrong?

The gay rights leaders counted on a total voter turnout significantly lower than the 30 percent who eventually cast ballots, despite high turnout for prior off-year balloting on gay rights issues in Maine and the deep-seated passions that citizens everywhere harbor on the issue. Virtually writing off whole regions of the state, the campaign focused on winning the city of Portland and the rest of Maine's southern coast. It neglected outlying towns and cities, even though some of them had defended gay rights in previous referendums. (It won only five of 16 counties this time around.) The campaign spent much of its funds on unconvincing media spots featuring Governor King, and failed to take advantage of the far-flung networks that had grown up through 20 years of grass-roots lobbying.

In addition, gay rights advocates did not do enough to court a few influential liberal allies. In 1995, several Catholic clergy participated in an interfaith group that opposed that year's anti-gay initiative. But this year, many Catholic leaders want-

ed the anti-discrimination bill to defer to traditional bans on homosexuality in churches and affiliated institutions. When the law passed without those minor concessions, most Catholic leaders stayed on the sidelines.

Perhaps most fatal of all, the campaign never offered a message to compete with the Christian right's argument that gays were seeking "special rights." This was particularly disappointing because that message is ultimately refutable. So-called "special rights," as Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy wrote in *Romer v. Evans*, the 1996 opinion striking down a Colorado anti-gay measure, are "nothing special." Rather, they are "protections taken for granted by most people either because they already have them or do not need them." The anti-gay sound bite rarely sells next to well-articulated, first-hand accounts of bias and violence suffered by actual people, and the case for legal recourse such incidents so compellingly make.

Where Maine's gay rights campaign went wrong.

The Christian Coalition promises to replicate the Maine results from coast to coast. But if gay rights advocates do not repeat the strategic errors so pivotal to the Maine setback, they stand a good chance of beating the right. Gay rights campaigns must not be lured away from the hard work of movement-building. A govern-

nor's endorsement, however assiduously gained, is no substitute for public education. And where tolerance is the issue, face-to-face contact can still outstrip the impact of television commercials—especially in small and tightly knit towns like those in Maine. The same lessons hold true at the national level, where the president's appearance at a gay rights dinner and the continuing hoopla over a lesbian character on a prime-time television show do not mean that the battle for tolerance has been won.

Just as civil rights leaders learned some painful lessons by watching citizens vote to ban affirmative action in California, gay leaders continue to learn from their ballot fights. Before Maine, gay rights backers had won four consecutive statewide referendums defending anti-bias protections, and the Supreme Court nixed the only anti-gay measure that voters passed. The loss in Maine proved that this is no time to be overconfident. On February 11, Family Research Council leader Gary Bauer told the *New York Times*, "I really think this is going to be an ongoing controversy well into the next century." ■

Hans Johnson, co-author of the *New Members of Congress Almanac*, is a writer and columnist in Washington, D.C.

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BY JOEL BLEIFUSS

A MOX on both our houses

An ill-conceived plan for Russian and U.S. plutonium stockpiles

In the aftermath of the Cold War, the United States and Russia both have huge surpluses of weapon-grade plutonium. In the interests of worldwide disarmament, everyone agrees that these stockpiles should be disposed of so that the plutonium cannot be used to build bombs. But what is to be done with it?

Since 1994, the U.S. State Department and the Department of Energy (DOE) have been holding talks with Russia's foreign ministry and Minatom, the Russian nuclear agency, about how to deal with the 50 metric tons of surplus plutonium that each country has in its stockpile. The negotiators considered two options: immobilizing the plutonium or turning it into fuel for nuclear power plants. Most environmentalists and nuclear proliferation experts say that the first option, a process called vitrification, is the safest way to get the plutonium out of circulation. But Russia refused to consider vitrification, claiming that plutonium is too valuable an energy commodity to simply destroy, and the United States insisted that each country treat its plutonium the same way. So in December 1996, the DOE announced plans to spend billions of dollars in order to turn most of its surplus plutonium into fuel.

The DOE describes its plan as a "dual-track" disposal system. The United States and Russia each agreed to vitrify an as-yet-undetermined portion (probably about 30 percent) of their surplus plutonium. The rest would be turned into what is known as a mixed-oxide (MOX) nuclear fuel. In this process, which has never been tried, weapons-grade plutonium 239 is heated and turned into plutonium oxide powder. The plutonium oxide is mixed with uranium oxide and pressed into small ceramic pellets. The pellets get loaded into zirconium fuel rods and are shipped to power plants, where they fuel reactors. The DOE plans to license and fund a facility (four sites are currently under consideration) to begin converting plutonium to MOX around 2003.

Many environmentalists argue that the process of converting weapons-grade plutonium and using it in reactors could have dangerous consequences. Peace advocates are worried

because the process dismantles the barrier between the civilian and military nuclear programs. And other critics contend that providing the civilian nuclear industry with military subsidies will only extend the life of a wasteful and increasingly dangerous industry that would otherwise be doomed because of utility deregulation.

The nuclear power industry is currently desperate for a shot in the arm. In April 1996, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission ordered electric companies to give each other access to their power distribution systems. The idea was to drive down prices by forcing utilities to compete with one another. But a number of companies—especially those that invested heavily in nuclear power during the '60s and '70s and are now saddled with aging reactors—are unable to compete. Federal researchers at Tennessee's Oak Ridge National Laboratory estimate that as many as 25 utility companies each have more than \$1 billion in "stranded assets," investments in nuclear facilities that are no longer productive.

Mary Olson of the Nuclear Information and Resource Service in Washington, D.C., says that MOX will ensure that the nuclear industry survives. "U.S. nuclear utilities will get a direct taxpayer subsidy at the very moment that they are facing the opening up of the energy market," she says. "A small fleet of reactors would stay open, fully supported by Uncle Sam and taxpayer dollars, to do a national security mission."

Attracted by the government subsidies and free fuel, 16 electric companies have told the DOE that they are interested in using MOX fuel in their reactors. Among them is Illinois' Commonwealth Edison (ComEd), the largest nuclear utility in the United States, with at least \$9.9 billion in stranded nuclear assets. As Mike Wallace, a ComEd vice president, explained to the *Chicago Tribune*, "We think there may be some benefits in fuel costs down the road to our customers and shareholders."

Some experts on nuclear proliferation are supporting the government, arguing that the dual-track disposal process, while not ideal, is the only way that the United States can pos-



sibly get Russia to agree to “decommission” its plutonium surplus. One such supporter is Mike Moore, editor of *The Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*. “The greatest threat right now comes from this weapons-grade plutonium that the Russians have in their stockpile,” he says. “Nobody wants to see that stuff on the black market. The Russians are unwilling to bury their weapons-grade plutonium. They believe it is valuable and has to be used, so let us encourage a plan where it could be used quickly and safely.”

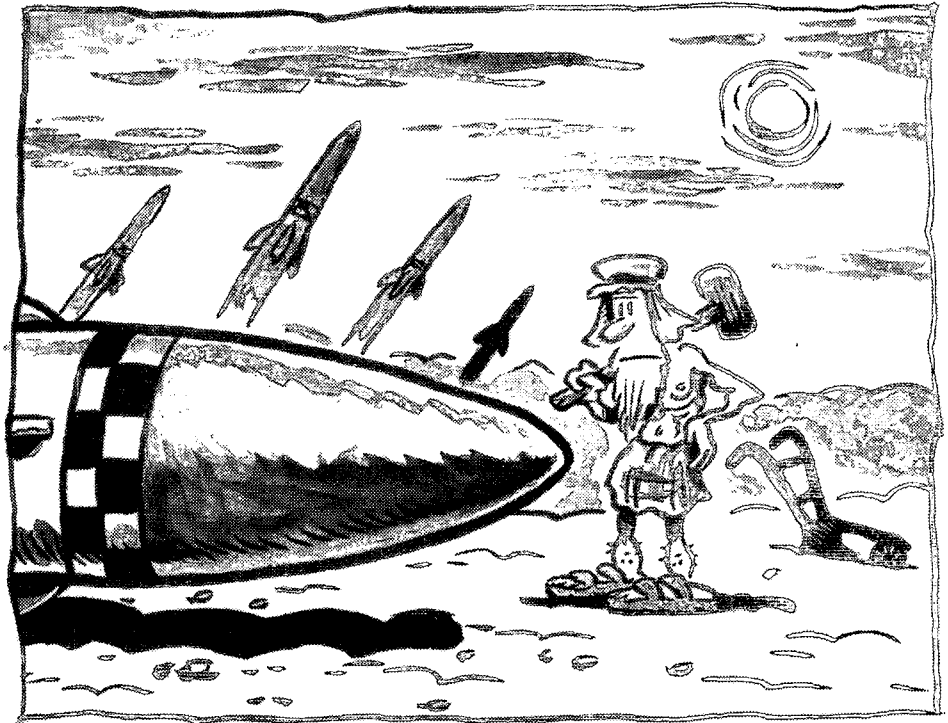
But critics wonder if MOX can be safely used in the reactors. Weapons-grade plutonium is mixed with the element gallium to help stabilize it. But when plutonium becomes part of a nuclear reaction, the gallium is released from the plutonium as a gas and later solidifies in the reactor. Gallium chemically corrodes the zirconium in the fuel rods. And if a rod breaks while in the reactor, radioactive particles would be released into the cooling system, elevating the levels of radiation discharged into the air and water. Moreover, an accident at a reactor burning plutonium-laden MOX fuel would release twice as much radioactivity as an accident at a reactor using uranium.

Arjun Makhijani, founder and president of the nonprofit Institute for Energy and Environmental Research in Takoma Park, Md., says that the DOE plan may eventually result in yet more plutonium being created. “We are setting up the Russians to do what they always have wanted to do,” says Makhijani, “and that is set up breeder reactors.” Breeder reactors burn plutonium for fuel but convert uranium into plutonium as a byproduct. For years, some members of the U.S. nuclear establishment have eyed this process as a way to further their dream of a “plutonium economy”—a high-tech future in which plutonium replaces oil as the world’s most valuable resource. “It will be very ironic,” says Makhijani, “if putting surplus military plutonium in a non-weapons usable form becomes the vehicle for establishing a plutonium economy.”

Plus, the program offers new opportunities for accidents or theft. How, for example, would this plutonium fuel be transported to whichever civilian utilities are awarded the contracts? Would it have to be transported under armed guard? And what about the possibility of accidents on our nation’s roads and railways? “We certainly have some concerns related to potential driver exposure to radioactive material and exposure of the public,” says LaMont Byrd, the national director for safety and health at the Teamsters, which represents many truckers. “But I can’t say we’re opposed to it. If it is going to be moved on the highway, it is absolutely crucial that

you have skilled, well-trained, properly equipped drivers and the appropriate equipment.”

Makhijani suggests that the State Department pursue the following agreement with Russia: Both countries agree to vitrify their surplus plutonium and then place it in an internationally monitored repository, where it can be withdrawn sometime in the future if it can be shown to be safe and economical. This plan, says Makhijani, would address the Russian belief that their plutonium is extremely valuable (after all, it did take billions of dollars to create), acknowledge that the plutonium is commercially unviable right now and take weapons-grade plutonium out of circulation.



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Nuclear power has been off the national agenda since 1986, when the disaster at the Chernobyl nuclear plant in Ukraine spewed radiation around Europe and the Middle East. Since then, we’ve accumulated further evidence that even mild accidents can be devastating. Last year, scientists at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill reported that Pennsylvanians who lived downwind from Three Mile Island—which experienced a partial meltdown on March 28, 1979—ran a greatly increased risk of contracting leukemia and lung cancer than people who lived upwind. And the famously shoddy safety record of companies like ComEd are frightening enough—even before we hand them untested, plutonium-rich fuels.

Before we dump billions of dollars of public funds into a struggling nuclear industry, we ought to have some sort of public debate about whether we need that industry in the first place. We should not prop up aging reactors that are unable to compete economically and that pose a threat to public safety. Perhaps we could use a few reactors for scientific research purposes, but we should declare our experiment with nuclear power a failure and move on. ■

INDIA'S identity crisis

Hindu nationalists
take power, but
regional parties are
the real winners.

By Ethirajan Anbarasan

It was an election that no one wanted, and no one was pleased with the results.

India's second general election in less than two years produced an extremely fragmented vote. The Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and its allies took 251 seats. A group led by the Congress Party came in second, with 166 seats. The outgoing United Front (UF) government—a coalition of 13 regional, centrist and communist parties—picked up only 95 seats, down from 146 in the last election in 1996. Independents and minor parties took 31.

After nearly two weeks of frantic deal-making, the BJP finally secured enough support to nail down a majority of seats in India's 543-member lower house of parliament. Party leader Atal Behari Vajpayee, described by the Indian media as a moderate, will become India's next prime minister. To muster this support, the BJP had to dilute its hard-line stance on sensitive national and religious issues, and agree to the opportunistic demands of an assortment of regional politicians.

For the fourth time since 1989, India is destined to live with a precarious coalition government. This political instability is closely linked to the historical decline of the Congress Party that, buoyed by the enormous popularity of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty, has ruled India for 45 of the 51 years since the country's independence from Britain in 1947. Congress was India's only truly national party, with influence in all parts of the country. Traditionally, the party enjoyed considerable support among Muslims, untouchables and tribal peoples.

Like many long-ruling parties, however, Congress has sunk under its own weight. Over time, the party grew smug and complacent, while corruption and nepotism corroded its ranks. After the assassination of Rajiv Gandhi in May 1991, the party no longer had a charismatic leader to guide it. Intra-

party squabbles during Narasimha Rao's tenure as prime minister between 1991 and 1996 further weakened the party.

Congress was first voted out of office between 1977 and 1980 because of popular resentment at Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's heavy-handed use of executive power. Rajiv Gandhi, who became prime minister in 1984 after his mother's assassination, lost the elections in 1989 largely because of his government's alleged role in shady arms deals. Congress, led by Rao, resumed control in 1991, thanks to the outpouring of public sympathy in the wake of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination on the campaign trail. But once again in 1996, Congress fell from power amid widespread corruption charges.

Congress stands for secular principles, seeking to preserve the special status granted to religious and linguistic minorities in the constitution. Past Congress governments have expressed their desire to keep the country's nuclear options open, but have not moved to develop a nuclear program. On economic issues, Congress followed a socialist model until 1991, when in a landmark decision, the party opened up the economy to markets and foreign investment. Congress favors deregulating the economy even further and wants to privatize money-losing state enterprises.

Since 1991, as Congress lost its hold in many provinces, regional parties began to emerge as powerful players, especially in the south and east of India, picking up the votes of untouchables and tribal peoples. This process culminated in the UF's taking power in 1996, with Congress as a minority partner. For the first time in India's history, a backward caste leader—Deve Gowda from the southern state of Karnataka—became prime minister.

The UF improved India's relations with its neighbors, especially Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. It also restarted



A get-out-the-vote sign in Bombay.

stalled dialogue with neighboring Pakistan, with which India has fought three wars since 1947 and still wages war by proxy in Kashmir. The UF government continued the free-market economic policies that Congress had instituted. The Indian economy grew at a 7 percent clip, and inflation dropped to less than 5 percent, compared to double-digit numbers two years earlier. Like other countries that have implemented neoliberal policies, the gap between rich and poor has widened. However, according to India's Planning Commission, the percentage of Indians living below the poverty line has declined from 36 percent in 1994 to 29.2 percent in 1997.

The drawbacks of coalition government soon came to the fore. Congress party chief Sitaram Kesri accused Gowda of

meddling in Congress' internal affairs, a charge that led to Gowda's removal as prime minister in April 1997. The UF's foreign minister, Inder Kumar Gujral, became the country's new leader. But seven months later, Congress brought down the UF government after a government report implicated one of the UF partners, Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK), a powerful regional party from the southern state of Tamil Nadu, in Rajiv Gandhi's assassination.

Aside from the regional parties, the other major political force to benefit from Congress' decline has been the Hindu nationalists. The BJP, which won only two seats in 1984, took 89 seats in the 1989 elections. In 1996, the BJP took more seats than any other party, but its government collapsed after only 13 days. In this year's election, the BJP garnered 176 seats, claiming victory for the first time in West Bengal and Orissa in the east and Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu in the south.

The BJP says it wants to transform India, one of the most socially diverse countries in the world with 18 official languages, into "one nation, one people and one culture," grounded in the traditions of the Hindu religion. The BJP is a strong advocate of the Hindu faith, which justifies the caste division within society on the basis of an individual's birth. Accordingly, the BJP's core of support comes from upper-caste Brahmins (priests), Shatriyas (warrior and landlords) and the business class.

The BJP favors eliminating the special legal status enjoyed by the country's minorities. Instead, it wants to establish a common civil code, which would apply to all Indian citizens. The party says it would like to abolish the special autonomy of the Muslim-dominated northern state of Jammu and Kashmir. And the BJP pledges to construct a Hindu temple in Ayodhya, in the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, on the ruins of a 400-year-old mosque demolished by Hindu extremists in 1992, which triggered nationwide riots that killed more than 2,600 people.

The BJP advocates its own form of economic nationalism, "swadeshi" (self-reliance). The party strongly opposes foreign investment in consumer sectors, especially food. It staged protests in New Delhi and in the southern city of Bangalore when Kentucky Fried Chicken opened outlets in 1994. BJP, in short, says it welcomes computer chips, not potato chips. While the party favors deregulating the domestic economy, it wants to open India to foreign competition more slowly than Congress.

The BJP takes a hard line against Pakistan and its other Muslim neighbors, believing that some of those countries encourage Islamic fundamentalist groups in India. In its election manifesto, the BJP pledged to review India's nuclear policy and

to deploy nuclear weapons. It hopes that, as long as it does not conduct new nuclear tests, it will not be subject to international sanctions. The party also promises to conduct further tests of "Agni," its intermediate-range ballistic missile, with the goal of enhancing its distance from 1,200 miles to 2,400 miles.

The BJP is controlled by ideologues from its parent body, the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), an extremist right-wing organization that aspires to create a "broader India" that would include Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. An RSS member, Nathuram Godse, assassinated Mahatma Gandhi in 1948. RSS justified the killing, saying that Gandhi favored the Muslims.

Until recently, most Hindus, who make up around 80 percent of the country's 980 million people, were not attracted to the BJP's message. Recoiling at the memory of the bloody ethnic and religious warfare that led to the creation of Pakistan in 1948, they saw secularism as the best way to maintain peace with the country's 120 million Muslims, who constitute nearly 12 percent of the population, and other religious minorities. A secular constitution was adopted in 1949 when India became a republic.

But in recent years, a number of factors have converged to reignite Hindu nationalism. From its base in the Hindi-speaking heartland of northern India, the party has dramatically expanded its geographic reach by directly appealing to pan-Hindu religious sentiment. The Indian media, which is dominated by the upper castes, has also given the BJP positive coverage. In the late '80s, Indian television broadcast year-long serials based on Hindu epics. These serials, which were very popular, stirred up ethnic pride by retelling myths of a glorious ancient Hindu society. Hindu-Muslim clashes, which became common in northern India in the '80s, also whipped up Hindu sentiments.

Pre-election polls showed a high degree of apathy toward the current election. Unlike previous races, where corruption, political violence or Hindu nationalism were hotly debated, no issue really caught the electorate's imagination this year. As a result, only half of India's 600 million eligible voters cast ballots, compared to nearly 57 percent in the previous election.

Congress, led by Kesri, took 141 seats, the same number that it had won in the 1996 election. Before the election, pollsters had predicted that the party would be humiliated, with their tally dropping below 100 seats. However, the decision by Sonia Gandhi, Rajiv Gandhi's Italian-born widow, to campaign for Congress prevented an electoral free-fall. Her appearances in 140 public events nationwide attracted large adoring crowds and boosted the sagging morale of party workers. Nevertheless, the party's share of the national vote fell from 29.7 percent in 1996 to 25.7 percent in this election. Congress leaders hope that Sonia Gandhi's post-election appointment as party president will help rejuvenate the party.

Realizing that it could not attract voters in all parts of India due to cultural and ethnic differences, the BJP cleverly struck strategic alliances with regional parties where it could not win seats on its own. The party made deals with Akali Dal in the Sikh-dominated province of Punjab and with Trinamool Con-

gress in West Bengal. In the south, the party forged an electoral alliance with the regional party, Lok Shakti. In Tamil Nadu, where regional parties have held control for more than three decades, the BJP joined forces with the main opposition party, All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK).

But the Hindu nationalists suffered a few surprising defeats as well. Voters in the western state of Maharashtra, India's most industrialized state, rejected the ruling alliance between BJP and Shiv Sena (Army of Lord Shiva), an even more militant Hindu nationalist party. The BJP-Shiv Sena alliance took only 10 of the 48 seats, compared with 33 seats in the 1996 election.

In the end, the BJP still had to scurry to find even more coalition partners to reach the magic figure of 272 seats. "I myself am committed to seeking consensus inside and outside the house on all important social, political, economic and national security issues," BJP leader Vajpayee said in a statement three days after the election.

If the BJP wants to keep its disparate coalition together, it will not be able to impose its extremist views in the national policy arena. The party's survival will depend on its allies, who do not support many of the BJP's most-cherished goals. "I don't expect any major rocking of the boat on economic or security or foreign policies at this stage," said Udhay Bhaskar, deputy director of the New Delhi-based Institute for Defense Studies and Analyses.

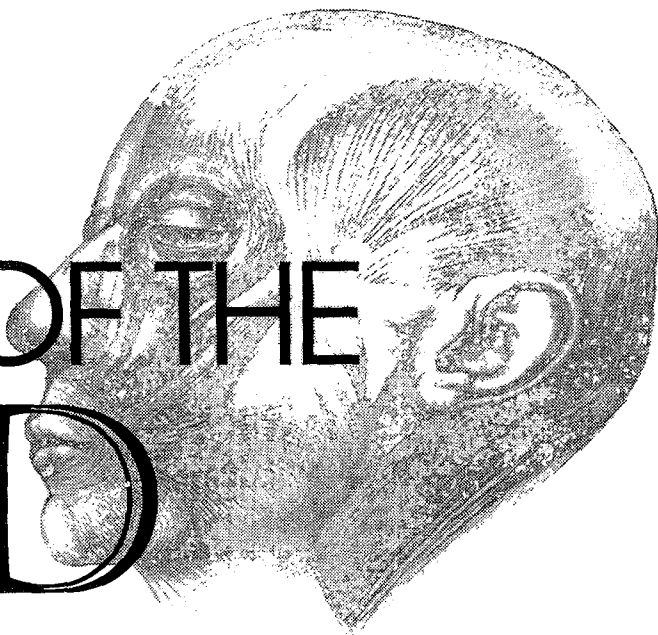
Despite the BJP's assurances of moderation, though, some observers still worry that the party will try to undermine India's long tradition of secularism. "BJP is only the mask," said Muthuvel Karunanidhi, chief minister of Tamil Nadu, whose ruling DMK party is a member of the UF. "If you remove the mask, you can see the RSS, a fascist militant movement that will be controlling the government."

While the BJP has formed the new government, the real winners in these elections are the regional parties. The BJP and Congress held their own, but the big gains went to their smaller allies. Congress allies picked up 25 seats and the BJP's allies 40 over the previous election. Most of the backward classes and untouchables voted for regional parties. Muslims, who overwhelmingly supported Congress until 1992, voted strategically in this election for the anti-BJP candidate that appeared to have the best shot at winning in their district.

The shifting parliamentary alliances and the grim fate of previous coalition governments raise doubts about the viability of India's parliamentary system. The tough demands and potential blackmail of the small parties will sorely test the world's largest democracy. As political columnist Inder Malhotra wrote recently in *The Hindu*, a newspaper in Madras, "Horse-trading is a hopelessly inadequate description of what goes on in Indian politics, which has converted itself into a massive and messy mart." ■

Ethirajan Anbarasan is a journalist for the Press Trust of India (PTI), the national news agency of India. At present, he is based in Paris on a Netherlands government fellowship to study European politics and security at the Journalists in Europe Foundation.

DAY OF THE DEAD



The declining autopsy rate
is hurting medical science.

By Alyson Mead

Vidal Herrera sets off to work at six each morning in a white van with 1-800-AUTOPSY emblazoned in huge black letters on the side. En route to his first dead body of the day, he coordinates his team of nine pathologists by cellular phone. Sometimes, he is interrupted by the heckling of other motorists, who lean out their car windows to call him El Muerto or Mr. Death.

The day I met Herrera, he was on his way to a funeral home to perform an autopsy on a 36-year-old man who had died of AIDS-related complications. The dead man's family had contracted Herrera because they had no insurance and wanted to determine if he'd had emphysema prior to death.

Wearing a tie-dyed T-shirt over green scrubs, Herrera was open and garrulous, quite the opposite of what I'd expected from a guy who spends most of his day in the company of corpses and body parts bobbing around in jars. In the funeral-home parking lot, we unloaded the van: a hazardous materials container, a few rudimentary surgical tools, specimen jars, and extra pairs of scrubs for Dr. David Posey, the attending physician, and me. Since Herrera is not a medical doctor, he hires local pathologists to oversee the procedures.

The autopsy took 45 minutes. Herrera collected tissue samples from the heart and lungs. At the end of the procedure, Dr. Posey concluded that the lungs showed signs of emphysema. Herrera had a relatively light schedule that day. There were only three more appointments—two full autopsies and one partial, just a brain.

Herrera learned to perform autopsies in the early '80s, while working as an investigator in the Los Angeles County Coro-

ner's Office. Noticing that the office had more bodies than it could handle, he sensed opportunity. In 1988, he established 1-800-AUTOPSY, which provides mobile-based postmortem services at a reduced cost (about \$2,100 per corpse, compared with the coroner's \$2,500). In addition to conducting complete autopsies, Herrera exhumes bodies for legal or research purposes, does serology and toxicology reports, and provides medical photography. Though business is currently restricted to the Los Angeles area, Herrera recently placed ads in national business magazines offering to place franchises in 24 other locations nationwide.

Herrera's eccentric small business is a response to a wider trend: the declining rate of autopsies nationwide. Doctors are reluctant to request them, scared to discover a misdiagnosis that could lead to an expensive malpractice suit. Health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and government agencies are reluctant to pay for them. And there is a shortage of doctors trained to perform the procedure.

The biggest loser is medical science. "People don't want to invest the time and money in something that doesn't have an immediate result," says Minneapolis pathologist Norman Berlinger. "At the end of an autopsy, you have a treasure trove in these jars of tissue and parts. We're not building up our treasure trove and will miss out on the continuum of learning. It's like cutting class early."

Since Pope Clement VI authorized physicians to perform internal examinations on dead plague victims in Europe in the 14th century, autopsies have become an invaluable method for understanding the origin, nature and course of

disease. In the more controlled environment of the morgue, doctors can test and refine scientific theories developed from observations made at a patient's bedside. Diseases such as pneumonia, emphysema and liver disease were first understood through autopsy.

The procedure continues to be critical for medical research. "In the past 10 to 15 years, many critical medical discoveries have come through autopsy," says Dr. George Lundberg, editor of the *Journal of the American Medical Association*

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(*JAMA*). "A good recent example is the delineation of HIV and AIDS-related diseases. Alzheimer's disease was primarily diagnosed through autopsy as well."

Autopsies are also valuable in evaluating the effectiveness of new drugs and treatments. "Autopsies are the best quality-control tool we have to make sure we are using the right treatments and medications," says Dr. Michael Fishbein, chief of the autopsy department at the UCLA Medical Center. The side effects of new drugs such as the diet pill Phen-Fen and the anti-depressant Prozac, he says, could be identified sooner if more autopsies were being performed.

Autopsies can also help determine a hereditary disease pattern, which alerts surviving family members to potential medical problems. Recently, for example, Herrera provided *pro bono* autopsy services for a poor family concerned about a potential congenital heart problem. After a brief procedure, he was able to reassure them that their dead relative had no signs of heart disease.

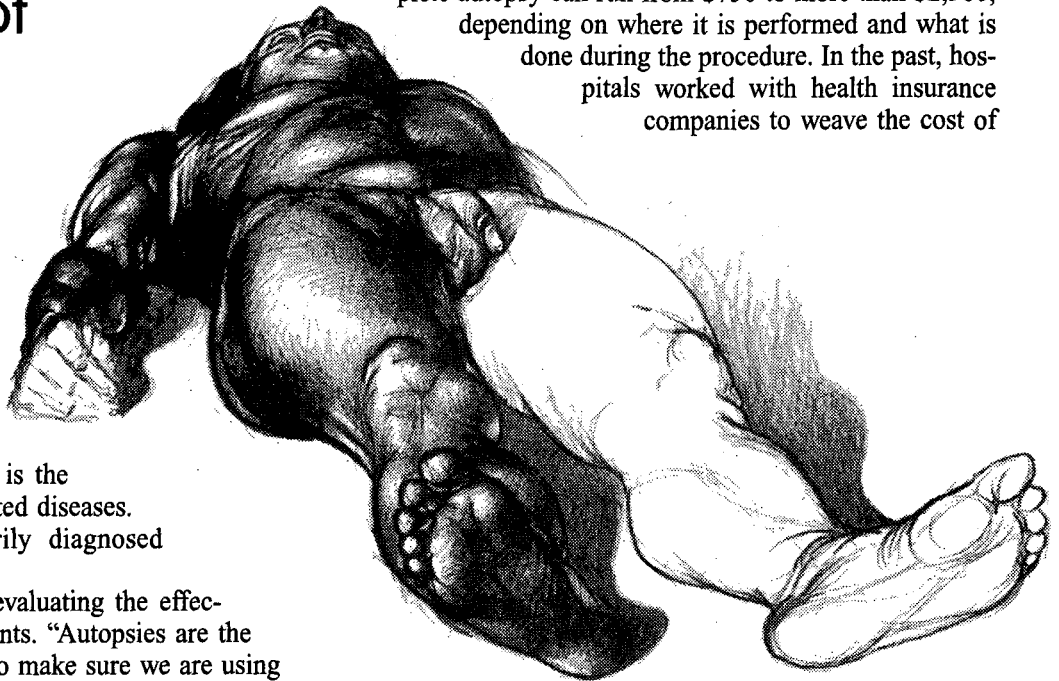
Not so long ago, government agencies mandated a minimum autopsy rate. Since 1953, the Joint Commission on Accreditation of Healthcare Organizations (JCAHO), a nonprofit organization designed to evaluate care, has offered accreditation to health care facilities, nursing homes and clinical laboratories. The JCAHO used to require hospitals to assure quality control by performing autopsies on a minimum of 20 to 25 percent of deaths. In 1970, however, the JCAHO dropped this requirement. The JCAHO continues to regard autopsy as an important

learning tool, says spokeswoman Janet McIntyre, but "our focus is on performance and not percentages."

Nevertheless, the autopsy rate has plummeted. University and teaching hospitals perform the most autopsies, on around 10 to 12 percent of their deceased patients. Community hospitals do the fewest, performing the procedure in less than 5 percent of deaths.

The circumstances of death usually determine whether or not an autopsy is ordered. If the death is sudden or possibly unnatural, the local coroner or medical examiner requests and conducts the autopsy. If the death is natural, the doctor of the deceased can request an autopsy. This is usually done only if the doctor deems the death worthy of further study. Families also have the right to demand an autopsy at no cost.

Autopsies are usually paid for by health insurance. A complete autopsy can run from \$750 to more than \$2,500, depending on where it is performed and what is done during the procedure. In the past, hospitals worked with health insurance companies to weave the cost of



autopsies into their reimbursable expenses or paid for them out of their own coffers. But now many cash-strapped hospitals complain that they cannot afford to pay for the procedure and cost-conscious HMOs routinely refuse to cover them, even in possible cases of malpractice. "We believe in the need for medical research but, in actuality, we're focused on financing health care, which provides reimbursement for the cost of getting someone well," says Richard Coorsh, a spokesman for the Health Insurance Association of America. "Death and autopsy have little to do with this."

Medicare coverage of autopsies is critical since, according to *JAMA* editor Lundberg, 75 percent of deaths in this country are Medicare patients. Some doctors, however, accuse the Health Care Financing Administration (HCFA)—the federal agency that administers Medicare and Medicaid—of not adequately reimbursing hospitals that perform autopsies. At a 1995 conference sponsored by the College of American Pathologists in Washington, D.C., some physicians called upon the HCFA to encourage hospitals to perform more

autopsies by increasing the fee they pay for the procedure and reinstating a minimum rate. The doctors also asked the HCFA to establish autopsy as a legitimate professional service, which would make payments to hospitals and physicians less complicated.

Making matters worse, in many parts of the country doctors qualified to conduct autopsies are in short supply. This seller's market has driven up prices. For example, the Harris County Medical Examiner's Office in Houston has begun charging neighboring counties \$1,200 for each autopsy it performs for them.

Some doctors are unbothered about the declining autopsy rate, arguing that new technology makes postmortem examinations unnecessary. "This is not the '60s," says Dr. Gary Dennis, a pathologist at Howard University Hospital in Washington, D.C. "Back then, we didn't have computerized scans or magnetic resonance imaging devices, so we didn't have the knowledge concerning the causes of death that we have today. Usually we know why the patient is dying even before that patient comes to the hospital."

Other doctors, however, argue that autopsies are the only surefire way to determine the cause of death and the effects of new treatments and medications. Lundberg says that, depending on the hospital, autopsies reveal a discrepancy of 10 to 40 percent between what a doctor originally diagnosed and what eventually killed the patient. "This suggests that we do not always already know the cause of death," says Dr. Steven C. Campman, a Sacramento-based pathologist.

With the rising number of malpractice lawsuits, doctors are reluctant to request autopsies that might open up a Pandora's box. Of the approximately 2.65 million autopsies conducted in the United States in 1996, the National Center for Health Statistics reports that 10.5 percent of the patients were victims of medical malpractice and 20 percent had been misdiagnosed or given inappropriate or unnecessary treatments. Of course, if more autopsies were being performed on a routine basis, these numbers would probably decline.

Ironically, there is one area where autopsies are in demand. In 1992, the Los Angeles Police Department developed a new program targeting drunk drivers aged 16 to 21. As part of their sentencing, drivers convicted of driving while intoxicated in this age group are required to attend a three-hour seminar, which includes viewing an autopsy. According to Juan Jimenez, assistant chief of the Investigation Bureau in the Los Angeles County Coroner's Office, the program, which was the first of its kind in the country, has had encouraging results. "In the five or six years that I've been doing this, I can only remember three or four people [out of 22 to 25 per week] who have

come back," he says.

The El Paso Police Department has adapted the Los Angeles program to help deter gang violence. Their rehabilitation project, which went into effect in March, requires gang members convicted of a violent crime to watch an autopsy being performed. In the case of murder, the gang member watches the autopsy on the person they killed, if the family gives its consent. This bare-knuckled approach is coupled with counseling. A similar program implemented last year in San Diego reports a recidivism rate of 2 percent. "We want these offenders to smell the blood and guts of the morgue," says Sam Santana, director of the El Paso Juvenile Probation Department. "It's not fun and games in there when they're cutting up the body."

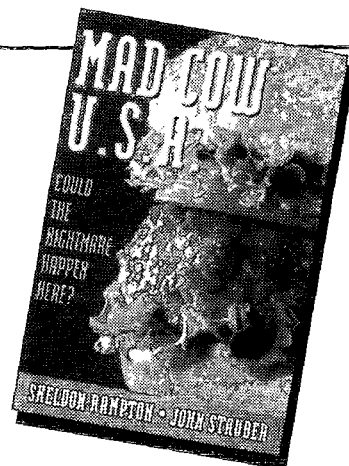
While medical science suffers from the decline in autopsies, business at 1-800-AUTOPSY is flourishing. Herrera performs an average of 900 autopsies annually. In fact, he claims, demand is so strong that he had to turn down thousands of other requests last year. As he drives around Los Angeles in what may be the city's most conspicuous vehicle, he says, "I want my name to be synonymous with death. After all, it's the most recession-proof business there is." ■

Alyson Mead is a freelance writer in Los Angeles.

MAD COW U.S.A. Could the Nightmare Happen Here?

by John Stauber and Sheldon Rampton

published by Common Courage Press
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Get on the Bus

The fair trade coalition that defeated fast track knows what it's against. But can it agree on what it is for?

By Roger Kerson

Riding high from last November's defeat of President Clinton's request for fast track authority to negotiate future trade deals, House Minority Whip David Bonior (D-Mich.) decided to lead a barnstorming bus tour through the South to examine the real-life impact of U.S. trade policy. The tour, sponsored by the Ralph Nader-backed Citizens Trade Campaign, targeted an America that goes unmentioned in the endless drumbeat of news stories about the booming stock market and rising consumer confidence.

For two days in late February, half a dozen members of Congress and their entourages visited churches, farms, factories and union halls. Events ranged from a spirited foot-stomping rally at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta to a more somber meeting with frustrated tomato farmers in Quincy, Fla.

Florida farmer Bill Boe, a lifelong Republican, was among the crowd of a hundred or so activists who came out for a fair-trade rally outside the Gainesville office of the Florida Farm Bureau. "There's a lot of skepticism as to whether this boom economy really exists," says Boe, whose family fruit farm has been hit hard by low-cost Mexican imports. "There are lots of people holding down two and a half jobs, and the average consumer carries over to the next month a couple thousand dollars on their Visa bill."

The rally, reported the *Gainesville Sun*, "did what no other issue has done in recent memory. It united local Democrats and Republicans, labor unions and business groups, environmentalists and farmers."

The sight of Republican farmers listening to speeches by liberal Democrats in a small Florida city is walking, talking evidence of the kind of political scramble that is occurring on trade issues. Workers see jobs headed south. Farmers see fruit and vegetables coming north. Small and medium-sized busi-

Georgia Congressman John Lewis, left, talks to tomato farmers in Florida.



nesses that supply domestic markets see their customer base eroding in the face of increased imports. Environmentalists see large corporations setting up shop overseas to avoid health and safety regulations. And Buchananites see world government undermining American sovereignty.

Creating a workable coalition out of so many disparate interests is no simple task. This odd group of political actors, informally known as the "unholy alliance," first came together for the battle over NAFTA, and sustained itself long enough to hand a stunning political defeat to the president and some very powerful political allies in the fast track fight. The next step will not be easy: developing an alternative trade policy that can win the support of these diverse political and ideological constituencies.

Accompanying Bonior on the bus tour, billed as a "Journey for Economic Justice," were a handful of Democrats who have been active with him on trade-related issues: Reps. Marcy Kaptur (D-Ohio), Bart Stupak (D-Mich.), Bill Delahunt (D-Mass.) and civil rights hero John Lewis (D-Ga.). Two Florida representatives—Allen Boyd and Karen Thurman—joined the bus when it passed through their respective districts. Populist radio talk-show host Jim Hightower was also along for the ride.

Bonior, a former seminarian and social worker, has represented a swing district in Macomb County, Mich., since 1976. His district is home to many "Reagan Democrats," those much-studied voters who are often cited as proof of America's increasing conservatism. Blue-collar Macomb County voters appear to have left their New Deal roots behind when they moved out of inner-city neighborhoods in nearby Detroit. While they regularly re-elect Bonior, they tend to vote Repub-

Anna Lewis, a former telephone worker, tells members of Congress about her new job: working in a retail store at half of her old wages.



Rep. Bart Stupak (D-Mich.), center, talks to laid-off telephone workers who saw their jobs move to Mexico.



from within his own party. Of course, if rank-and-file Republicans hadn't broken ranks with their leadership, fast track would have sailed through. But a cadre of nationalist Republican lawmakers suspicious of the international institutions created by many trade agreements and GOP members who don't want to grant any type of extra executive authority to Clinton joined the Democratic opposition.

But the main reason fast track was a tough sell was economics, not politics. As the vote approached, the *Wall Street Journal* noted that U.S. Trade Representative Charlene Barshefsky had a hard time lining up votes for the measure. Every member of Congress she talked to, the *Journal* reported, had a story about a plant that had closed

in races for senator, governor and president.

But when the topic is trade, Bonior says, his constituents are not happy with Clinton's version of trade liberalization. "Too many people have lost jobs because a plant moved overseas," he says. "Or if it didn't happen to them, it happened to someone they know."

This growing popular disenchantment with NAFTA and like-minded free trade accords gave momentum to the political confrontation in Washington last year during the fast track debate.

Clinton was asking for the authority—granted to five previous presidents—to negotiate trade deals that could be brought back to Congress on a strict up-or-down vote, with no amendments allowed. The administration wanted to be armed with fast track authority for a variety of upcoming trade talks, including discussions about expanding NAFTA to include Chile, the creation of a hemisphere-wide "Free Trade Zone of the Americas" and the creation of an Asia-Pacific Free Trade Zone.

Clinton had unusual allies for a Democratic president, including strong support from House Speaker Newt Gingrich and the rest of the Republican leadership, plus a \$3 million lobbying campaign funded by major U.S. corporations in the Business Roundtable.

Despite these assets, the White House was unable to overcome the opposition mounted by an unusual coalition that crossed party and ideological lines. On November 10, knowing they lacked the votes to pass fast track, Gingrich and Clinton agreed to withdraw the president's request.

The anti-fast track coalition's largest bloc was made up of a solid majority of the Democratic caucus. By most scorecards, Clinton never had more than 20 votes for fast track

in his or her district due to overseas competition.

Fast track was an especially hard sell in Florida, where the value of the state's tomato crop has declined by more than \$400 million since NAFTA took effect in January 1994. More than 100 farmers have closed up shop, citing competition from Mexican imports.

Bonior's tour bus made a stop at a deserted tomato-packing facility in Quincy, where a crowd of growers, ranch hands and field workers had assembled. Through an interpreter, the Spanish-speaking field workers told the visitors that they could earn \$140 a week picking tomatoes in the United States, as opposed to just \$40 a week in Mexico. Florida farmers see that wage differential as an unfair advantage for their Mexican counterparts.

The farmers also claim that Mexican farms use pesticides that would never be allowed here. Jay Thomas, a tomato farmer who organized the Quincy gathering, paid for a clandestine camera crew to videotape farm operations in Mexico. The tape shows farmworkers mixing batches of hazardous pesticides in open containers, using their bare hands.

One farmer at the gathering suggested that one way to level the playing field with Mexico would be to ease environmental restrictions on U.S. farmers. "We're losing methyl bromide," he says of the Environmental Protection Agency's order to phase out the chemical's use by 2001 because, although safe for consumers, it depletes the ozone layer. "There are no scientific facts that it's dangerous. We've been using it for 100 years, and it's a totally safe insecticide." (Mexico has agreed to phase out use of methyl bromide by 2014.)

But what really gets these farmers mad is the assurances they received—in writing—from Clinton and then-U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor before NAFTA's passage that

they would be protected from an import surge. "When you've got a letter from Mickey Kantor," says Pat Cockrel of the Florida Farm Bureau, "and you call the White House and you're told he doesn't work here anymore, you get a little bit concerned about what any future negotiations might hold."

The plight of Florida tomato growers has been closely watched by the state's citrus growers, who see oceans of Brazilian oranges coming their way if the proposed "Free Trade Zone of the Americas" becomes a reality.

In 1993, 13 of the 23 members of Florida's congressional delegation voted in favor of NAFTA. In 1997, Citizens Trade Campaign staffers estimate that the administration would have received no more than eight votes.

Having made it very clear what they are against, self-styled "fair traders" now have to answer a tougher question: What exactly are they for?

House Minority Leader Richard Gephardt (D-Mo.) took a run at the problem earlier this year, when he began circulating a draft version of his own fast track bill. Gephardt's bill would have opened the process of trade negotiations to greater public scrutiny, and mandated environmental assessments of trade pacts before they went into effect. He also called for tough environmental and labor standards to be incorporated into the text of new pacts, rather than be appended as toothless "side agreements." But his proposal has never seen the light of day.

A number of fair trade supporters told Gephardt they simply can't swallow the concept of fast track, which forces Congress

to deal with complex trade agreements in a short time span with no ability to make amendments. "No one objected to the substance of the bill," explains Gephardt aide Mike Wesel. "The concern had to do with the process that the bill facilitated. We want to keep the coalition that defeated fast track together, so we will withhold it."

Keeping that coalition together will be difficult.

Environmentalists would like to use trade agreements as leverage to impose stricter global controls on pesticides and other chemicals. But many American farmers who opposed fast track would like to see fewer restrictions, not more, on their ability to use chemicals to manage their crops.

Meanwhile, Gephardt, Bonior and many of their Democratic colleagues insist that the rights of workers overseas have to be protected as part of any new trade agreements. The United States, Bonior says, should follow the example of the European Union, which required low-wage countries like Greece and Portugal to raise their living standards before joining a common market with higher-wage nations like Norway, Sweden and Germany. To Bonior, raising living standards overseas is both a moral imperative and a means of self-defense for U.S. workers, who are facing unbearable, downward pressure on wages.

But the business groups who fought fast track say the litmus test for allowing imports should not be how a country treats its workers, but whether it allows American companies equal access to its domestic markets. "I probably agree with Dave Bonior and Dick Gephardt on the analysis of the problem," says Kevin Kearns, president of the U.S. Business and Industrial Council, "but we differ on solutions."

The council, one of the few business groups to oppose fast track, includes over a thousand small and medium-sized U.S. manufacturing companies, as well as some larger, high-profile firms known for the conservative political orientation of their owners, such as Coors Brewing and Milliken and Co., a South Carolina textile firm. "My focus is on not accepting unfettered access into our economy unless we can sell our goods in foreign economies," says Kearns. "I'm not as an organization going to go around the world telling country X, 'You have to improve your labor unions.' Nor do I think it's likely to be as successful for Americans to decide what the minimum wage in Mexico should be. It sets you up to administer all sorts of things around the world."

Given their evident differences, it's hard to imagine how the members of the "unholy alliance" will ever manage to give their common blessing to a new set of trade policies. But supporters of further trade liberalization can hardly gain comfort from the present state of affairs. They have yet to create the borderless world of their dreams, but they have helped stimulate what might once have been dismissed as fantasy: an intriguing political dialogue between people on the left and right who, not so long ago, were barely on speaking terms. ■

Roger Kerson is editor of the National News Reporter, an Evanston, Ill.-based monthly newspaper published by the United Broadcasting Network.



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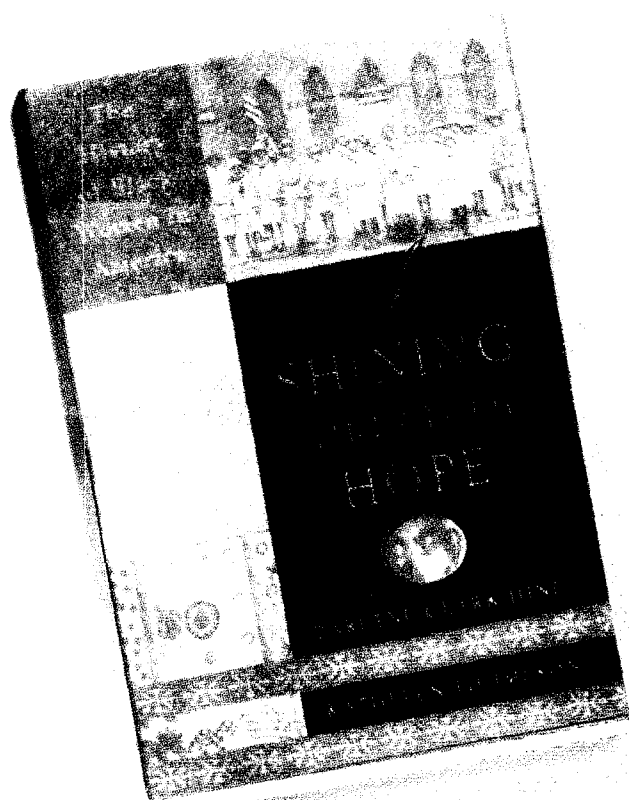
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Black Women's Voices

**A Shining Thread of Hope:
The History of Black Women in America**
By Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson
Broadway Books
355 pages, \$27.50

REVIEWED BY NELL IRVIN PAINTER



From time to time, a work of history itself makes history. *A Shining Thread of Hope: The History of Black Women in America* by Darlene Clark Hine and Kathleen Thompson is such a book, marking a giant step toward a more encompassing portrait of our nation's past. The first general history of African-American women, it signals the blossoming of a new field.

In the '70s, American history textbooks began to take account of the field of black history. In the '80s, women's history began being added to the mix. Now, in the '90s, we are witnessing the emergence and acceptance of a field that had not previously existed: black women's studies, including black women's history. To my mind, the changes have been for the good, for they have made it difficult to ignore the injustice and oppression, as well as the long-neglected experiences and contributions, that are as much part of our national past as our dearly prized democracy and individual equality.

Why is this process so recent? Historians, of course, do not have to belong to the group they write about. But usually

they do, especially when a field is just emerging and still lacks academic prestige. As a result, the development of black women's history had to wait for historians who are black women to produce the books that influence textbooks. Once black women became respected historians, they could write surveys of their own. Among the pioneers of black women's history in the '70s, Darlene Clark Hine has made some of the finest contributions.

To a great degree, Hine herself—through her groundbreaking scholarship—created the market for a general history of black women. In her now-classic body of work—including the magnificent two-volume reference work, *Black Women in America: An Historical Encyclopedia*, which she co-edited with Rosalyn Terborg-Penn and Elsa Barkley Brown—she has set the pace for this new discipline.

Now Hine and Thompson—who helped write and edit *Black Women in America*—are reaching out to a wider audience of students and general readers. They will succeed, for this new history bears their stamp in ways that make

it fresh as well as meaty. *A Shining Thread of Hope* introduces many unsung women, addresses readers invitingly, provides startling visual images and clearly illuminates the tragedies as well as the triumphs of African-American women. Let me say more about each of these strengths.

As any survey of African-American women must, *A Shining Thread of Hope* discusses the giants of black women's history—women such as Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, Ida B. Wells-Barnett and Rosa Parks. Hine and Thompson also deal with women who are well-recognized in the field of black women's studies but less well-known outside the academy, such as Maria W. Stewart, the early 19th-century lecturer, and Ella Baker, the brains and soul behind the civil rights movement of the '60s. These are important, even necessary contributions. But Hine and Thompson go on to introduce myriad unsung women of greatness: artists such as the gifted quilter Harriet Powers—whose sex, race and class deprived her of recognition during her lifetime—and civil

rights activists such as Anna Arnold Hedgeman, who tried in vain to have even just one black woman admitted to the podium of the March on Washington of 1963. Readers learn that hundreds of black women have made history, not just the most famous.

The authors invite readers into black women's history by speaking to us directly as "you." They also ask us to imagine ourselves in the situation of historical subjects. Because the particulars of so much early history is still lost or undiscovered, Hine and Thompson occasionally, and effectively, create composite characters—such as "Oni," an imagined African captive who survives the Atlantic Middle Passage and adjusts to enslavement in the New World—to give their story focus. This direct address and immersion works beautifully to break down barriers between historical subjects and readers.

This deeply informed history is brought to life by often-lyrical writing, such as the following passage on the slave trade:

Oni and the other women in that first ship were the first of thousands, tens of thousands, of black women who would be brought to labor in America. They

would live lives of sorrow and toil, separation and loss, and often desperate humiliation. They would also create a new culture in this new land. Weaving fragments of their African past with rags and threads from a new, alien world, they would dress themselves in dignity, love, and even joy.

The authors carefully detail the places where the experiences of black women diverged from those of black men. During slavery, they write, "Black women formed a subculture as a base from which they could protect themselves—against all white people, on the one hand, and against all men, on the other."

And the authors unearthed enough diaries, letters and oral histories to bring many women to life in their own words. Writing about black women who have migrated to the North, we hear from chiropractor Sarah D. Tyree in 1921: "I firmly believe in a womanly independence. Believe that a woman should be allowed to go and come where and when she pleases alone if she wants to, and so long as she knows who is right, she should not have to worry about what others think."

American readers, as members of a visual culture, appreciate scholarship

animated by illustrations. In this case, photographs and drawings are doubly precious, because we still run short of images of black women in everyday life. As though to remedy the scarcity, Hine and Thompson include three sections of photographs of workers, farmers, celebrities, artists, socialites, athletes, suffragists, protesters, musicians and mothers. There are photos of black Army nurses in World War II and of "Stagecoach Mary" Fields, who lived a free but rugged life in Montana and was Gary Cooper's childhood idol. These images feed a hunger for non-sensational visual images, bringing their subjects out of the realm of the unfamiliar and closer to readers.

Readers will also appreciate the high-quality design of this attractive book, in which each chapter opens with an exquisite photo. Careful thought has gone into all the chapter titles and headings, such as "Blossoming in Hard Soil," on the late 19th century, and "The Caged Bird Sings," evoking Maya Angelou, on the 1970s and '80s. Two of my favorite headings are "O, Ye Daughters of Africa," echoing Maria Stewart, and "Not Quite Free, Not Quite Wives," on enslaved paramours.

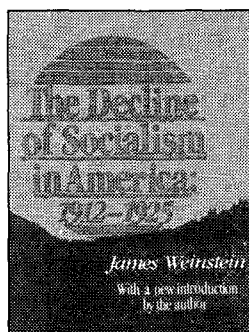
Perhaps the most difficult trick Hine and Thompson pull off is rendering a history that slights neither the hardships nor the achievements of black women. Quite rightly, they name law, custom and violence as black women's enemies and obstacles and show exactly what that meant. They are not saying black women had to break the law in order to live, but that American law, by codifying white supremacy and prejudice against women, worked to black women's detriment. Showing how black women have transcended unjust laws and worked to change them, Hine and Thompson also confirm a history larger than the sum of our oppression.

In short, *A Shining Thread of Hope* sets itself a daunting task and completes it brilliantly. It delivers a clear and elegant history of Americans who have known the worst of our society and yet produced some of its best exemplars. ■

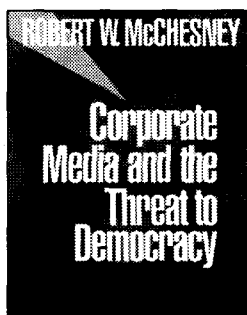
Nell Irvin Painter teaches history at Princeton University and is author of *Sojourner Truth: A Life, A Symbol*.

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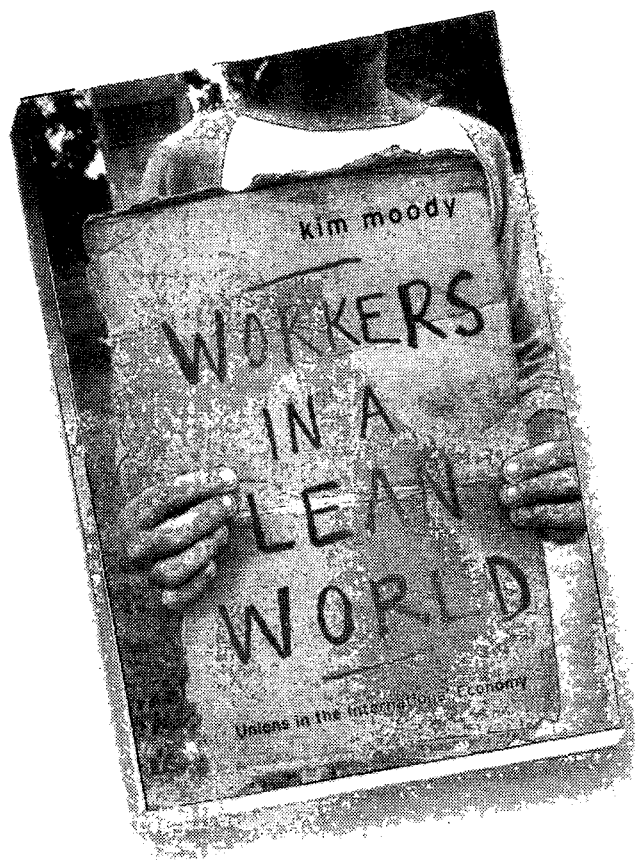
**Workers in a Lean World:
Unions in the International Economy**

By Kim Moody

Verso

342 pages, \$20

REVIEWED BY DAVID BACON



This fall, Italy's Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), which leads the country's new government of ex-Communists, fought it out with their former comrades in the Refounded Communist Party (Rifondazione). The PDS proposed cutting social benefits and resisted measures to reduce high unemployment. The party equates Italy's survival with membership in the new European economic order, and has few qualms about making the required sacrifices to gain entry. While the votes of Rifondazione deputies keep the PDS in power, they refuse to join it, condemning its efforts to force Italian workers to swallow the bitter medicine of austerity.

These glaring fractures in Italy's left reflect growing divisions in working-class movements throughout Europe and beyond. "There is no Communist movement internationally anymore," says Ramon Mantovani, international affairs director of Rifondazione. "There are two lefts in Europe now. One accepts globalization, and wants to direct it. The other wants to leave that system, by reform or other means."

This new division of the left is one of the most important political characteris-

tics of our time, and will grow deeper and more permanent. In *Workers in a Lean World*, Kim Moody, director of the Detroit-based newsletter *Labor Notes*, speaks directly to the way neoliberalism and globalization have fractured the left. He analyzes and traces the roots of this division, assesses its impact on workers, and—most importantly—sees the beginnings of new working-class movements in response to it.

Most books about globalization these days are depressing, concentrating on the growing reach and integration of transnational corporations and their ability to bend political and economic policy to ensure greater profits. While many writers clearly see the human cost, most don't really believe workers can do much about it. Socialism is dead, after all. Ameliorating the worst effects of capitalism gone mad is about the best we can hope for, they say. Workers come off as victims, sometimes able to win small improvements but powerless to challenge the nature of the system.

Moody is more of an optimist but not unrealistic. He spends the first half of the book analyzing the growth and power of transnational corporations,

focusing in particular on the development of lean production systems. Not only are workers increasingly connected across borders by international production lines, but they are subjected to the same management methods for boosting productivity and controlling the workplace. Weakened and co-opted by team concept and total quality management techniques, unions at factories around the world are in crisis.

But Moody says that the basic problem of workers seeking social and economic justice is political, not economic. In the second half of the book—which looks at the politics of working-class internationalism—Moody makes a basic point ignored by most progressive analysts: No real challenge to the power of the transnationals is possible without first solving the political problems of workers movements.

In Moody's analysis, social democracy is failing workers. Whether it is the British Labour Party deciding not to reverse the privatization and anti-union legislation of Margaret Thatcher or Bill Clinton's campaign for NAFTA, the political parties built by working-class votes are abandoning workers to the

mercy of the free market.

Social democracy made its first strategic concession to capital in the pre-World War I era of Eduard Bernstein, the theoretician of Germany's powerful Social Democratic Party, who argued that socialism could be achieved through gradual reforms rather than revolution. Social democracy's second concession came in the decades after World War II, when it gave up on state ownership of industry as the basis for socialism. Moody points to the late William "Wimpy" Winpisinger, president of the U.S. International Association of Machinists, as an example of this "twist." Winpisinger had the guts to call himself a socialist during the Cold War, but his brand of socialism was more akin to humanizing capitalism. "I'm for the kind of socialism that makes capitalism work," he said.

Today during the third retreat, Moody writes, social democratic parties act "not so much as the radical dismantlers of previous state regulation, as do the right-of-center neoliberals, but as the leaders of a more gradual retreat." These parties are increasingly uncommitted to the defense of reforms achieved in the '30s and after World War II. They accept the argument that increasing corporate productivity and profits—even at the cost of falling incomes and lost social benefits—are necessary for nations to compete globally.

Wimpy must be turning over in his grave.

The recent decision by the Liverpool dockworkers to end their three-year strike dramatizes social democracy's decline. While Conservative Prime Minister John Major was in power, the dockworkers faced the opposition of the government in their fight against the privatization of British ports and destruction of longshore unions. But to the dockworkers' dismay, Tony Blair's election didn't lead to government intervention on their behalf. The "new" Labour government is also committed to privatization and has no intention of reversing the anti-labor tide that destroyed the dockworkers. Even the Trades Union Congress, the federation of British labor organizations tied to the Labour Party, was unwilling to demand reinstatement

of the Liverpool strikers and their union.

The dockworkers' situation illustrates Moody's conclusion that only a radicalized labor movement will be able to mount a militant struggle to defeat neoliberalism. "Social movement unionism," as he calls it, "is deeply democratic, as that is the best way to mobilize the strength of numbers in order to apply maximum economic leverage. It is militant in collective bargaining in the belief that retreat anywhere only leads to more retreats—an injury to one is an injury to all." This kind of unionism also engages in political action independent of liberal and social-democratic parties but in concert with broad coalitions of other unions, community organizations and social movements.

Moody isn't just saying that labor needs to be more international, a point made by many other writers. Just establishing connections between conservative unions in different countries—a "global business unionism" as he puts it—will not effectively challenge the new global economy. Unions must be transformed. They must become more democratic and militant but also project a vision of some social alternative to the present order.

He finds such unions in South Africa (the Congress of South African Trade Unions), South Korea (the Korean Confederation of Trade Unions) and Brazil (the Unitary Center of Workers). These are all democratic, left-wing unions based on the principles of rank-and-file control over union decisions and of militant struggle against employers and governments pursuing anti-worker policies. They are highly political and willing to pursue an independent course in politics. The Congress of South African Trade Unions, for instance, while strategically allied to Nelson Mandela's African National Congress (ANC), has nevertheless launched massive strikes against the ANC government to defend pro-worker legislation and stop neoliberal development policies intended to encourage foreign investment at the cost of social benefits and workers' rights.

These three unions were all viewed as pro-Communist by former AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland, who tried mightily to destabilize them in U.S. intelligence-funded programs. Today,

however, AFL-CIO International Department head Barbara Shailor speaks positively of building new relationships with these unions. It's still a long way from joint bargaining or strike action against multinational corporations by unions in many countries, but it's a genuine new direction.

Moody does have a blind spot. He ignores the dire situation facing workers in Russia and other formerly communist countries. In these places, a particularly savage form of capitalism reigns. The government refuses to pay millions of workers for months at a time while destroying their social benefits. This effort to restore capitalism at any price is part of the global neoliberal agenda, depriving workers of any alternative.

Nevertheless, Moody makes a great contribution by pointing to recent struggles in which workers have challenged the new order. He describes the 1994 general strike in Nigeria led by oil workers, whose leaders still languish in prison. He enthuses over the French general strike of 1995, which stopped the effort there to gut social benefits. And he sees the seeds of change in our own labor movement in the organizing struggles of immigrant workers and the grass-roots solidarity movement along the U.S.-Mexico border.

But his greatest contribution is raising the question of an alternative to capitalism. He goes beyond pointing out that people need a positive vision of a future of social justice and equality, not just an understanding of the evils of the present system. He connects the socialist vision to social movement unionism.

Moody quotes Sam Gindin of the Canadian Auto Workers: "Making alternatives possible requires a movement that is changing political culture (the assumptions we bring to how society should work), bringing more people into everyday struggles (collective engagement in shaping our lives), and deepening the understanding and organizational skills of activists along with their commitment to radical change (developing socialists)."

Now there's a real prescription for a new direction. ■

David Bacon is associate editor of *Pacific News Service* in San Francisco.

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Continued from page 30

painting; Victor Manuel, whose modernist primitivism portrayed a sensual, exotic side of Cuba; and Amelia Pelaez, whose personal vision of cubism incorporated images of Cuban flora and architecture. Pelaez, along with Wifredo Lam and Carlos Enriquez, rose to international heights of popularity and influence in the '30s and '40s.

Though Cuban art critics admit to a certain dampening of creative enthusiasm during the '60s and '70s, quality and spirit survived. Those years have been called the golden age of the poster in Cuba. Art historian David Craven points out that the Cuban art posters, though in the same genre as Soviet socialist realism, were "more compelling aesthetically, but also far less guilty ideologically of a fetishizing individualism."

By the '80s, the revolution's free education system, which made art instruction available to anyone in Cuba who had talent, helped create a sophisticated and competent generation of Cuban artists who were in touch with their own popular culture. Their art portrayed Cuban and Afro-Cuban street life and contained many references to Santería (the Afro-Cuban religion in which Catholic saints are avatars of Yoruban spirits). This new, innovative artistic spirit reacted to the social and political dilemmas of Cuba.

This new generation of artists rebuffed subtle state censorship through performance art, installations and street demonstrations by groups such as "ABTV" (the name stood for four members of the group) and the "Arte Calle" group.

In 1987, for example, at a Havana performance, Arte Calle held up a picket sign that read, "*Arte o muerte, Venceremos*" (Art or death, We shall overcome). As Havana art critic Gerardo Mosquera has written, "The 'art of the Revolution'—like the Revolution—turns out to be something very different from what the leftists dreamed or what the rightists railed against." He writes that Cuban youth generally are "allergic" to rhetoric, and in their art, they "delight in dismantling ideological constructions and mechanisms of manipulation."

By the end of the '80s, the boundaries of criticism had tightened, becoming "very restricted" for Cuban artists, according to Mosquera. In the early '90s, following the fall of the Soviet Union, street demonstrations were few. The hard economic times encouraged many of the art stars of the '80s to accept grants and leave for better opportunities outside the country while those who remained had to face a daily search for food instead of art supplies. The government suppressed some openly critical art exhibits. At the 1991 government-sponsored Havana Biennial, an international art event that since 1984 has exhibited Cuban artists alongside those from Africa, Asia, the Middle East and the rest of Latin America, the politically critical work was either cancelled or moved to East Havana, out of reach of most of the exhibition participants. In the '90s, says Cuban artist and critic Antonio "Tonel" Elegio, the political content of Cuban art is still there but it is "not on the surface."


In the early '90s, as installations and street performances waned, Cuban artists increasingly began to use traditional media once again. Art sold at Veradero Beach must make it easier for artists today to survive, even with the government taking a 50 percent cut. The prices, however, generally seemed low for such high-quality work. Costing from \$100 to \$300 for fine oils, paintings are no more expensive than a weekend at a Veradero Beach hotel room.

Of all the variety of art, it was the harmonious, painterly visions of the Yumuri Valley by Mendez that captured my attention when I visited. When I learned that he lived not far from our group's accommodations in Matanzas, I sought him out. The Mendez family lives in crowded rooms that serve as both home and studio. Because he sells his paintings, Mendez is doing well by local standards. He has a Fiat, which he keeps in prime condition, though he can get very little gasoline. To us, he never complained. Still, it was clear that the food shortage is very real for his family.

When Fidel Castro assumed power in 1959, Mendez was a 39-year-old architect. For many years, he designed box-like apartment complexes and hospitals for the government. Though tedious, the work was rewarding, he says. "Before Fidel Castro, many people had no shelter, no medical care," he says. "Times are hard now, but many people had it harder before the revolution."

We spoke of his need for medicine and a better diet to recover from his ulcer. Perhaps in response, he took us to the Matanzas cemetery, a vast sculpture city of tombs and crypts, and showed us where his bones would rest. He says he expects to be there soon. ■

Jennifer E. Miller is a North Carolina painter.



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In the end

A Painter of Cuba

By Jennifer E. Miller

food, medicine, even toilet paper, were not. As the old homes crumble, the families within make do.

We first saw Mendez's serene landscape paintings during a government tour of Veradero Beach, Cuba's semi-capitalist swank resort near Matanzas. Behind the guarded gates, in the plush mall and "world-class" hotels, a spectacular assortment of art is displayed and sold to tourists: abstract, expressionistic, surrealist, symbolic, primitive, erotic, religious. Much of the art we saw was rambunctious or irreverent. Some of it contained hints of sociopolitical criticism, such as one painting of people trapped in ugly mazes or another of a skeletal figure struggling upward toward the surface of a Caribbean blue sea.

This great wealth of contemporary art has deep roots in Cuban society. After the turn of the century, Cuban artists threw off their European classical training and traditional subject matter, and began to pay attention to Cuba—the light and color and architecture, and the country's unique mixture of ethnicities and religions.

This is the tradition in which Emerio Mendez paints. As he grandly told us when he took us to a vantage point from which we could see the vast and beautiful Yumuri Valley, which serves as a backrest to Matanzas, "I am a painter of Cuba!"

A self-taught painter, Mendez said that one of his major influences was Leopoldo Romañach, a painter who taught at the prestigious Academy of San Alejandro in Havana. The adjective "conservative" is generally attached to the academy, which opened in 1818. But Romañach is credited with turning the attention of some of his most famous students toward Cuban landscapes and people, while encouraging them to follow their own inclinations and styles: Eduardo Abela, who painted idealized portraits of Cuban peasants and *el campo*; Antonio Gattorno, also a painter of peasants and the countryside, who helped introduce French modernism into Cuban

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My first view of Cuban painter Emerio Mendez was of a man in great pain. Sweat beaded on his forehead and his color was bad, but his eyes were bright and wide. Still a strong man at age 78, he visibly pushed his pain aside as he rose to greet us. For 40 years, he has suffered from stomach ulcers, he says. In Cuba, in this "special period" after Soviet economic aid was cut off in 1989 and with the U.S. embargo still in force, Mendez's condition has worsened. But he seemed pleased by the unexpected visitors who came to talk with him about his art.

My friend Margaret and I were in Cuba in January with a Witness for Peace delegation to examine the effects of the U.S. embargo. As a painter, I was interested in seeing contemporary Cuban art and meeting artists. Our group stayed in Matanzas, a coastal town of about 30,000 that is two hours by car from Havana. Layers of pastel paint peel off the town's aging Spanish buildings. We gaped through open wooden doors into scenes of deteriorating colonial grandeur: marble floors, colorful painted tiles, stained-glass windows, spiral staircases, 20-foot ceilings, and courtyards filled with tropical plants and fountains. Here, landscape paintings and out-of-tune pianos were plentiful, while basic necessities such as